

The State of Honolulu's Arts and Culture
"Bring me solutions, lead by example!"

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It is an honor to represent the United States Conference of Mayors and particularly, my home, the City and County of Honolulu. I am also honored to be able speak with you on a topic that is very close to my heart; Arts and Culture. As the Chair of the Standing Committee on Tourism, Arts, Parks, Entertainment and Sports of the United States Conference of Mayors, we recognize the importance the arts play in each and every city.

I am the Mayor of the 13th largest city in the nation, a collection of Islands more than 2,000 miles from any continental land mass. Living in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the gateway to Asia and the other Pacific Island nations, I can tell you first hand how the culture and arts of our diverse communities are an integral part of our daily lives. We interact with the arts every day. The arts and culture is imbedded into the architecture of our homes, in the language we use to communicate, the different types of food we eat to nourish our bodies, in the music we listen to, the clothing we wear, and the activities we participate in as a community.

Here's a sampling of the types of activities taking place in Honolulu: the annual performance of "The Nutcracker," of course. Several holiday craft fairs featuring local artisans and artists. The Lion King at the City's Neal Blaisdell Concert Hall—which is concluding a highly successful three-month run; dozens of performers playing at hotels, clubs, or concert venues, their repertoires featuring everything from Hawaiian folk music to pop ballads to classical music. We have plays and orchestral performances at the local colleges. Considering we're in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, we don't think any archipelago of comparable size, or even many U.S. cities for that matter, can claim as rich an offering of culture and the arts as we.

Honolulu is also a very popular television and movie-making destination. We are the primary site for landmark television shows, like *LOST* and travel and history shows. Honolulu has been filmed in blockbuster movies like *Jurassic Park 3*, *Fifty First Dates* and Universal Studios' May 2008 feature *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*. Honolulu is the hub of Hawaii's \$100 million film industry that showcases local culture, talent and our stunning beauty as a great city to audiences around the world.

Keep in mind the arts are broadly distributed through every geographic or socioeconomic area. We must not assume that the arts are solely clustered in large urban areas or just in museums and concert halls. The arts are everywhere, throughout every city and town in the United States. The arts and culture are in everything we see, hear, taste, touch, and feel. It allows us to be individuals while at the same time it links us as a community, a state and as a nation.

As the Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu our administration focuses on three major themes: fiscal accountability, basic city services and making the city the best place to live, work and raise a family. Our administration knows that these themes are more than a task, it is my passion to create and maintain a vibrant community where my wife and I live, where my family calls home and where my friends from around the world will come to visit. That is why our administration knows that while we maintain the sewers underground we must maintain the beauty of our parks and beaches. Public safety must work hand in hand with the promotion of cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity. Our fiscal responsibility must be transparent; honest and open to our community; and the same principles apply to the arts.

One of the initiatives of our administration is to address the stewardship of our islands in the *21st Century Ahupua`a*. This sophisticated and successful resource management system honors our Polynesian heritage by renewing our commitment to self-sufficiency and the protection of our precious islands. The goals and mission of this initiative is to look at the future sustainability of our pristine environment. While the focus of the *21st Century Ahupua`a* is on environmental issues, its concepts are based on traditional Hawaiian cultural values. Our cultural values define us as a city and as an island state. It also brings to the forefront the cultural assets we possess and allows us to use these assets to compete in the national and global market as we protect our natural resources, focus on cultural tourism and build a stronger and vibrant community.

Hawaii's Leadership in the Arts

When I took the office as mayor of the City and County of Honolulu, I was honored to be the first local born Mayor in 40 years. It is not often that someone gets to be the mayor of a city he or she was born and raised in and as such, has a profound affinity for the city of his birth.

On October 27th, the International Herald-Tribune named Honolulu one of "The Top Ten Most Livable Cities." While we are ranked No. 9, after such cities as Munich, Copenhagen, Tokyo and Sidney, Honolulu is the only American city to make the list. This designation is a testament to the people of Honolulu and it also means we must continue to lead by example.

Historically, the Hawaiian Islands have been the leader in education, culture and the arts; and we will continue to do so. In 1850, led by the ruling monarchs of the islands, Hawaii had the highest literacy rate in the world. In 1881, King David Kalakaua, Hawaii's last ruling king, was the first state dignitary to travel around the world. A gifted composer, King Kalakaua made it his personal task to infuse culture and the arts at all levels of government in order to maintain the islands' integrity and to compete with the other countries he visited. The king created a renaissance of music, dance and the arts with the byproducts of building social capacity, economic benefits and cultural and eco tourism more than 150 years before these terms was ever defined.

The motion picture industry's love affair with Honolulu started more than 100 years ago. The first filming of footage shot in Honolulu took place in 1898, just seven years after the invention of the motion picture camera. In 1913, Universal Pictures came to

Honolulu and shot the first feature films in the islands—*The Shark God* and *Hawaiian Love*.

In the 1940's, all eyes looked at our islands as Hawaii became a focal point of World War II. Through our cultural arts, our music, and our dance we showed the world the resilience of our island people. In 1967, forty years ago, Hawaii was the first state to pass a resolution appropriating 1% of all state and city government building costs to the arts in public places. Two-thirds of the city's 900 piece art collection was acquired through funding by this law. More than 100 sculptures and monuments are accessible to the public in the outdoors.

In 1968 the landmark television show *Hawaii Five-0* helped introduce Hawaii to the world. The beauty of the islands, aloha spirit of our people and the catchphrase "book 'em Danno," became a part of the public consciousness.

In 1997, as a member of the City Council, I introduced a bill to establish an arts enterprise program. One of the outcomes of that bill is the ARTS at Marks Garage in downtown Honolulu, which led to a partnership with the Hawaii Arts Alliance and the Ford Foundation. The project continues today by serving as a catalyst to the revitalization of the Chinatown area. The arts enterprise program created a place for the arts to thrive and attract other businesses to take advantage of the growing area; including the first free WiFi zone in the city. The revitalization has also led to Chinatown's recognition as a Preserve American Community designation by First Lady Laura Bush. Today in addition to the Arts at Marks Garage, Chinatown has flourished, featuring close to forty galleries and arts venues in the area, restaurants that showcase the flavors of the world, and the return of a nightlife scene to a part of town that heretofore has been deserted after work. For example, this past year, more than 40,000 people attended the monthly First Friday event in Chinatown in which the art galleries and neighboring businesses collectively open their doors for the evening. This activity incorporates more than 80 community partners, 1,000 artists, and directly impacts more than 130 neighborhood businesses. Activities such as this are the result of the areas revitalization efforts through the arts.

One of our city's greatest assets is the Royal Hawaiian Band. This 171 year old band was founded in 1836 by order of King Kamehameha III. We believe the band is a vital part of Hawaii's daily life. The band not only contributes to the enjoyment of music, but it provides a historical link to the past through its music. It represents the islands which have evolved from a monarchy to a territory and finally to the 50th State of the United States of America. We are proud to say that the Royal Hawaiian Band is an agency of the City and County of Honolulu and is the only full-time municipal band in the nation.

In addition, Hawaii's unique cultural and artistic diversity is perpetuated through the various ethnic groups that bring their values to the mix. Of course our Native Hawaiian community celebrates our indigenous host culture and heritage through a variety of annual cultural events. Also, each year the Chinese community has a tremendous Chinese New Year celebration. The Filipino community brings forth annual fiestas that resemble the village lifestyle seen in their home country. The same goes for the

Portuguese, Scottish, Greek, Okinawan, and Samoan communities, and the list goes on and on.

The number one television show in the world, *LOST*, seen in more than 210 countries and territories, uses our unique cultural and architectural mix to film. Convincingly each week parts of Honolulu have been transformed to appear as other world class cities. We have been Los Angeles, New York, Seoul and even Berlin.

We recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of Honolulu's municipality and the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Filipinos in Hawaii. Both of these year-long celebrations enriched hundreds of thousands with community events and activities that reflected on Honolulu's rich history and the many reasons why Honolulu is the great city it is today.

Lastly, Honolulu has the greatest Christmas celebration in the world. Now in its 23rd year, tens of thousands gather to view the decorative Christmas trees, holiday wreaths and to enjoy the nightly entertainment by our talented community groups and performers at City Hall. More than 70,000 are expected to attend on opening night which we have dubbed, "Honolulu City Lights."

Arts Education - Creative Industry

We all know of the benefits of the arts and arts education. The arts link cognitive growth to social, emotional, neurological, and academic development. A wealth of research concludes that those who study arts out perform 'art-poor' students by virtually every measure: grade, test score, attitude and behavior irrespective of social economic status. Yet, the arts are often pushed to the rear of our educational agencies throughout many cities and states in America. We need to change our preconceptions that arts are a "nice-to-have" and change our perception that the arts are a "need-to-have."

We need to implore our government officials to place the arts on the same level of importance as reading, math and science. We must begin to look at the arts as one of the educational skills that will be carried within a child through their years in school and with them into the future. The creative skills learned will make a difference on how the future of America's employment force competes in the world of tomorrow. Our social and economic benefits are dependent on it.

The Japanese educational system, which on many levels ranks ahead of the United States, is utilizing the arts as a key skill for the future. A reason for this is attributed to the fact they set standard hours in the national elementary school curriculum emphasizing subjects such as music, arts and handicrafts, in addition to math and science. We need to learn from their example, in order to compete at a global level.

As a supplement to general arts education, we can take a look at Minnesota, with its abundance of "arts incubators." Those incubators have greatly contributed to neighborhood and community development by raising cultural awareness and helping communities use art as a problem-solving tool to connect residents with each other and

to express identity and pride. Minnesota has proven that government can foster partnerships in the community to create a means of perpetuating the economy at large.

Our neighbors in Canada are showing success through their government involvement in facilitating strategic investment in the arts through public-private partnerships. During the past five years, key support in the performing arts leverages equal private sector dollars and earns a positive return of 200% based on direct and indirect benefits alone. They are reaping many additional benefits in education, community engagement, national brand identity, regional development, and highly motivated employees.

Hawaii's economy is based primarily on tourism. As a tourist destination we have focused on the arts and culture as an integral part of the sun and surf package. Our goal is to be known as the Pacific Region's "cultural destination." To achieve this we have tasked the administration to place culture and arts as a priority. Within our administration we have a Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts, a Honolulu Film Office and a Mayor's Office of Economic Development. All three offices report directly to me at a cabinet level. These three departments work hand in hand to promote and perpetuate Hawaii's unique arts and culture throughout the City and County of Honolulu and to support a creative industry. This past year our Office of Culture and the Arts awarded \$290,000 in grant funds to nonprofit arts organizations for various art and cultural projects. These funds provided a return gross investment of more than \$4 million in the community. Our Office of Culture and the Arts also supported more than 200 community events and cultural and arts activities, enriching more than 325,000 people. The Honolulu Film Office, which is part of our Office of Economic Development, has worked diligently to assist in the expansion of the film industry. Monies spent for film production in Honolulu is anticipated to surpass the \$100 million dollar mark for 2007. This office has worked with our legislators to pass a measure called Act 88 which gives filmmakers a 15-20% production tax credit. In addition, our workforce is very active in this industry, for example, the feature film project *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* is credited with generating more than 75,000 man-hours for our creative labor pool. Having these department heads report directly at a cabinet level allows us first hand knowledge as to how our city government policies affect our communities' cultural practices, arts economy, the tourist industry, and the quality of life that is dependent on the social and cultural well-being of the city.

Call for Federal Cabinet Level office on Arts and Culture

This year the U.S. Conference of Mayors celebrates its 75th anniversary as a nonpartisan organization of cities. We continue to work to strengthen federal-city relations and to ensure the federal policy meets all of our cities' needs. We developed an action agenda for tourism and arts as part of our **Mayors' 10-Point Plan: Strong Cities, Strong Family, For a Strong America**. It states the arts, humanities, and museums are critical to the quality of life and livability of America's cities. It has been shown that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates \$166.2 billion in economic activity annually, supports over 5.7 million full time jobs, and returns over \$12 billion in federal income taxes annually. Governments which support the arts, on average, see a return on investment of over \$7 in taxes for every \$1 that the government appropriates. Furthermore, federal, state and local governments, private foundations, corporations

and individuals, provide access to artistic activities for peoples of all races, creeds, and income levels. Recognizing the importance of the role of arts, many countries throughout the world have established national cabinet level positions for arts, culture and tourism. The nation's mayors urge the creation of a Cabinet level Secretary of Culture and Tourism charged with forming a national policy for arts, culture and tourism. Resources must also be invested in nonprofit arts organizations through their local arts agencies with full funding of the federal arts and culture agencies.

When you factor in the creative industry you can see that it is the fastest growing industry in the nation. It consists of all businesses, both in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, involved with the production or distribution of the arts including the performing arts, literary arts, applied arts, humanities, media arts, support services and art education. According to the Americans for the Arts, the industry increased by 5.5% from 2004 to 2005; clearly outpacing the total U.S. business growth which increased by 3.8%. The creative industry provides employment for more than just artists, curators and musicians the industry directly supports builders, accountants, printers, and an array of occupations spanning many other industries.

For more than 20 years, the U.S. Conference of Mayors has worked with the Americans for the Arts—the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, in promoting and emphasizing arts policy and programs. In recognizing the importance of the arts we have and will continue to support initiatives that affect every aspect of life in America today.

The nation's mayors support full funding for arts and humanities agencies and support the National Endowment for the Arts. The mayors support increased funding for arts education and we recognize the importance that the nonprofit arts industry plays in the economic and cultural vitality of cities.

By making arts and tourism part of our 10-point plan, the U.S. Conference of Mayors makes it emphatically clear that there is a need to address arts and culture as a viable and substantial subject of national importance. As we look towards the future, we should ask our presidential candidates how they will respond to the needs of individual cultural practitioners and working artists. What policies and platforms will they implement to assure that a vibrant and sustainable creative industry thrives in each of our cities and to what extent will arts education initiatives be prioritized in their administration's agenda?

Conclusion

Honolulu is one of, "The World's Top 10 Most Livable Cities." We believe it is the arts and culture that has helped Honolulu fit the definition of a global city. Similarly, the state of our arts and culture will help define us as a nation. Each presidential candidate's position on arts and culture will also define how the future state of our cities' needs will be met when it comes to building **"Strong Cities, Strong Families, for a Strong America."** Mahalo!